

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks. Prior to entry of this response, Claims 12-33 were pending in the application, of which Claims 12 and 23 are independent. In the Office Action dated February 11, 2004, Claims 12, 13, 23, and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and Claims 12-14, 18-25, and 29-33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Claims 15-17 and 26-28 were objected to, but were deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Following this response, Claims 12-13, 16-24, and 27-33 remain in this application. Applicants hereby address the Examiner's rejections in turn.

I. Rejection of the Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

In the Office Action dated February 11, 2004, the Examiner rejected Claims 12, 13, 23, and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 4,022,034 ("Matsuda"). Furthermore, in the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 12-14, 18-25, and 29-33 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 4,781,039 ("Ribarev") in view of *Matsuda*. Claim 12 has been amended to include the recitations of dependent Claims 14 and 15, and Applicants respectfully submit that the amendment to Claim 12 overcomes the rejection of Claim 12 and adds no new matter. Claim 23 has been amended to include the recitations of dependent Claims 25 and 26, and Applicants respectfully submit that the amendment to Claim 23 overcomes the rejection of Claim 23 and adds no new matter. Claims 16-19 and 27-30 have been amended to comport with the amendments made to independent Claims 12 and 23,

respectively, from which they depend. The amendments to Claims 16-19 and 27-30 do not narrow the claimed subject matter nor add new subject matter. Claims 14-15 and 25-26 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, independent Claims 12 and 23 patentably distinguish the present invention over the cited art, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of these rejections of Claims 12 and 23.

Dependent Claims 13, 16-22, 24, and 27-33 are also allowable at least for the reasons above regarding independent Claims 12 and 23, and by virtue of their respective dependencies upon independent Claims 12 and 23. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of these rejections of dependent Claims 13, 16-22, 24, and 27-33.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims. The preceding arguments are based only on the arguments in the Office Action, and therefore do not address patentable aspects of the invention that were not addressed by the Examiner in the Office Action. The claims may include other elements that are not shown, taught, or suggested by the cited art. Accordingly, the preceding argument in favor of patentability is advanced without prejudice to other bases of patentability.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge
any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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